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To Gain One's Soul: Kierkegaard and the Hermeneutical Virtue of Patience

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Abstract: In his 1843–1844 *Upbuilding Discourses* on patience, Søren Kierkegaard makes the claim that one gains one's soul in patience. Philosophically speaking, this claim seems to be a meshing together of two unrelated topics: the virtue of patience, which usually falls under moral philosophy, and the topic of the soul, which belongs to metaphysics or religious discourse. Rather than interpreting Kierkegaard's talk about the soul as merely poetic or religious rather than properly philosophical, in this essay I attempt to take his connection between the virtue of patience and the constitution of the person seriously. I do so by arguing that the constitutive elements of the Kierkegaardian self can be understood hermeneutically as a proto-fundamental ontology. I then identify how Kierkegaard describes the virtue of patience in distinctly hermeneutical terms not as qualities or traits that adhere to the person but as a particular way of inhabiting space and time in relation to God. In patience, the self remains rooted in the present, bearing the weight of the loss and lack therein, while maintaining an anticipatory openness toward the future—a future that ultimately only God can provide. Patience, I conclude, is a way of being in time that is necessary at the constitutive level of the hermeneutical self.

Keywords: Kierkegaard; virtue; patience; hermeneutics; virtue ethics; selfhood

1. Introduction

In Kierkegaard's discourse "To Gain One's Soul in Patience", he presents what seems like a meshing together of two unrelated philosophical topics: the virtue of patience, which usually falls under moral philosophy or virtue ethics, and the question of the soul, which traditionally belongs to metaphysics or religious discourse. In the virtue ethics tradition, virtues are commonly referred to as traits or dispositions of character that inhere in the soul, mind, or whatever else is considered constitutive of the self. Virtues are attributes or secondary qualities of a person, and as such they cannot be constitutive of the self in any technical sense. Thus, the self can have the quality of patience, but the self nevertheless is a self even if this quality does not obtain. Metaphysically speaking, if it is true that the soul (whether considered an immaterial substance or the form of the person) is what someone essentially is, then, strictly speaking, it cannot be gained. Though Kierkegaard takes this claim from Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, he seems to see not just a spiritual metaphor but a genuine philosophical connection between cultivating the virtue of patience and gaining one's soul.

To help Kierkegaard out, we might grant his discourses some philosophical coherence by arguing that they present patience as a "soul-making" virtue, or a way one's soul admits certain properties. On a more existential or even psychological register, perhaps we could say that patience is merely a way that a human being is able to bring a sense of unity and direction to her life. In that case, is Kierkegaard's use of "soul" in this discourse merely a poetic term for the pursuit of a life that is meaningful and authentic? Or, is it a religious concept that is held by virtue of special revelation and is not immediately connected to the philosophical descriptions of selfhood in his authorship? While I think the text could be read reasonably (and profitably) in a strictly existential or religious manner, what if we allow Kierkegaard's claim to hold our feet to the philosophical fire, as it were, by taking his connection between virtue and the constitution of the person seriously?

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Citation: Bowen, Amber. 2024. To Gain One's Soul: Kierkegaard and the Hermeneutical Virtue of Patience. *Religions* 15: 317. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030317

Academic Editors: John Lippitt and C. Stephen Evans

Received: 17 November 2023
Revised: 16 February 2024
Accepted: 20 February 2024
Published: 4 March 2024

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In this essay, I attempt to see what it seems Kierkegaard sees by probing the possibilities of a genuine philosophical connection between gaining one's soul and the virtue of patience. To that end, I will present my argument in three parts. In Section 1, I argue that the Kierkegaardian self is a hermeneutical self. To make my case, I refer to the most technical description of the self in Kierkegaard's authorship, which is attributed to Anti-Climacus in *The Sickness unto Death*. I maintain that the constitutive elements and layers of relationality Anti-Climacus presents are best understood as a proto-fundamental ontology which presents the self as an embodied living subject inscribed in a temporal horizon yet structurally open (in a transcendental and not just existential sense) to the fullness of eternity. In Section 2, I map this conception of the self onto the way Kierkegaard talks about the soul in his 1843–1844 *Upbuilding Discourses*. I show that a hermeneutical reading of the Kierkegaardian self brings philosophical clarity to how the soul can be lost and what is required for it to be gained. Finally, in Section 3, I will show how the virtue of patience plays an essential role in that process by closely examining Kierkegaard's 1843–1844 discourses "To Gain One's Soul in Patience", "To Preserve One's Soul in Patience", and "Patience in Expectancy". I notice that his approach to this virtue initially appears to have strong affinity with the virtue ethics tradition. However, upon further investigation, it becomes clear that both his investigative approach and his conception of patience go beyond that tradition, without necessarily being incompatible with it. Kierkegaard gets at the essence of patience not primarily by determining its motivations, expressions, traits, or even habits, but by examining it as a phenomenon internal to temporal existence, including the particular temporal existence of Anna the Prophetess. Patience, therefore, is a way of being in time that is at once rooted in the present and open to the Eternal. Inhabiting time in this way, I argue, is what it means for the self to maintain a healthy tension between its constitutive elements, or its fundamental ontological structures, of necessity and freedom, finite and infinite, temporal and eternal. If this is true, then it really is the case that "in your patience you will gain your souls".

2. The Hermeneutical Self

Merold Westphal argues that Kierkegaard is a hermeneutical thinker, but not like Martin Heidegger (Westphal 2024). I think Westphal is correct, but in this essay I will support that claim a bit differently than he does by looking at the descriptions of the self in Kierkegaard's authorship. The most technical and comprehensive formulation is attributed to pseudonymous author Anti-Climacus in the 1849 text *The Sickness unto Death* (hereafter *SUD*). This text was written quite a few years after Kierkegaard's 1843–1844 collection of *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* (hereafter *EUD*) and thus might seem to be an inappropriate starting point for my analysis. However, I proffer that Anti-Climacus' later description is a more philosophically formal articulation of concepts already present in the earlier discourses.[1] In this section, I will highlight the constitutive elements of the self in that description, arguing that they function theoretically as a fundamental ontology, or as transcendental structures that make subjective experience possible and embodied existence meaningful. One strength of this hermeneutical reading, I will argue, is it is capable of accounting for the self as both a gift and a task, both contingent and creative, finite and yet structurally open to the fullness of eternity.

Selfhood in Sickness Unto Death

Anti-Climacus describes the self structurally in terms of three layers of relationality. The first relational layer is constituted by three pairs of tensions: the infinite/finite, the eternal/temporal, and freedom/necessity. The finite, the temporal, and necessity represent the "givens" of a person's existence, not least the gift of existence itself. The self finds herself always already given to herself, which means that her existence is not something she has self-initiated but something that she has received. The givenness of her existence includes her situatedness in a historical and linguistic context, her embodiment, and other particulars with which she finds herself rather than which she has chosen. The constitutive elements

of the infinite, the eternal, and freedom refer to the self's capacity to transcend these particulars to some extent. The healthy self embraces the givens—the formal constraints—while creatively cultivating them into greater, more expansive possibilities. For example, she recognizes herself as historically situated without being historically bound, essentially temporal but not exclusively temporalized.

C. Stephen Evans argues that "in one sense the self is a substantial reality, an entity created by God. In that sense, a self is something I am, something I cannot help being. However, the self that I am is a unique kind of entity, one that is composed partly of possibilities, and thus in another sense the self is something I must become" (Evans 2009, p. 50). Evans rightly seeks to articulate the Kierkegaardian self in a way that includes both metaphysical "givens" and the existential "task". Others, like Patrick Stokes and Anthony Rudd, make similar attempts, though they have argued against describing the givens in terms of metaphysical substance at all (or at least not in a technical sense). Instead, they favor narrative accounts of identity, or narrative plus "minimal self" approaches, that permit some sort of first-personal givenness which makes the existential task of selfhood possible (Rudd 2012; Stokes 2010). In this essay, I too am endeavoring to give an account that includes both the givens and the task of selfhood, but I am doing so by casting Kierkegaardian selfhood hermeneutically in terms of a proto-fundamental ontology. By my judgment, a hermeneutical articulation of the self would not be at all incompatible with certain metaphysical accounts and even has many affinities with the narrative plus transcendental "minimal self" accounts. However, the phenomenological–hermeneutical tradition naturally integrates the self's "objectivity" and "subjectivity" rather than considering them to be two entirely different modes of investigation (such as metaphysical or third-personal accounts versus subjective or first-personal accounts) which may produce compatible accounts that could be held together (such as narrative *plus* minimal self accounts). As I see it, this feature makes it an attractive analytical tool that could produce compelling ways of understanding Kierkegaardian selfhood.[2] Moreover, a hermeneutical articulation of the self brings the self's temporal inscription into view in ways that other accounts do not, particularly as it permits not only an interpretive and self-reflective account of one's existence across time (as narrative does, for example) but a deeper description of ways of inhabiting time or modes of being in time as constitutive of the kind of self one becomes. As I will show, this way of thinking about temporality and the self is important for the way Kierkegaard discusses the virtue of patience.

The second relational layer, according to Anti-Climacus' description, is the self's recognition of herself as a self who is shaped by these constitutive tensions and who must actively maintain a harmonious balance between them. Here, we see the self's self-conscious reflection and meaningful agency come into play as fundamental features of selfhood. The infinite/finite, the eternal/temporal, and freedom/necessity are conditions of experience for embodied and situated beings. Not only do these structures frame subjective experience, making it interpretable, but they do so in a way that makes meaningful agency within it possible. Hence, there may be a time when the self should put more weight on her limitations (necessity), and other times when she should focus on her possibilities (freedom) (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 21). These reflective acts are themselves acts of interpretation and just what it means to be a conscious, embodied self in the world. Similarly, the self experiences temporality not merely as an external criterion of measurement or even an a priori structure that facilitates the sequencing of events in experience. Rather, the self *is* temporal, which means she experiences time not as something represented by the watch on her wrist but tacitly as a fundamental structure of her very existence. Importantly, while the self is temporal, for Kierkegaard, she is not enclosed in temporality but is also structurally open to eternity. She is essentially finite but is also in essential relation to the infinite. I will elaborate on this idea further in the next two sections. For now, the point is that the constitutive elements are ways in which the self imaginatively and even tacitly navigates her experience of the world and the selfhood that is at stake in it.

Though the Kierkegaardian self comprises opposite elements, Anti-Climacus does not refer to them as different substances in the Cartesian sense, and he locates identity not in one part but in the *tension* or relational synthesis between the constitutive elements (Descartes 1988, p. 116).[3] That is not to say that substances do not exist or that it is improper to think of the self in substantialist terms, but that his account of the self locates identity not in one part but in the *tension* or relational synthesis between constitutive elements which, on my reading, function more like transcendental structures than different substances. Hence, the material and the spiritual, contingent and creative aspects of a person stand in inseparable relation with, and are always co-implicated in, one another. The self always relates to herself in her constitutive elements as one living thing, or as a fundamental unity, about which she is concerned. Therefore, for Anti-Climacus, selfhood is not a finished product, but neither is it a matter of self-creation. Rather, we might say that selfhood is structured by responsibility: in *response* to the gift of her singular irreducible existence, the self takes up the pursuit of authentic—or, as I will argue below, *virtuous*—existence.

After promulgating a philosophically dense definition of selfhood, Anti-Climacus then comes to a rather deflating point: "Considered in this way, a human being is still not a self" (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 13). There must be yet another relational layer that is essential to the self's makeup. This is because, as he says, "Such a relation that relates itself to itself, a self, must either have established itself or have been established by another" (Kierkegaard 1983, p. 13). As he sees it, the internal relation of the self is not posited by the self, but is *given* by Another, an establishing Power which stands outside of the self. Evans makes the point that, for Anti-Climacus, one cannot give an accurate picture of the self that ignores God, even if that conception does not rest on distinctly Christian revelation (Evans 2022, p. 224). Stated in hermeneutical terms, we could say the God-relation is an essential part of the Kierkegaardian self's fundamental ontology. Thus, Anti-Climacus offers, at least in part I of *SUD*, a purely *philosophical* description of an essentially *theological* self. The self is given to herself always and already through this fundamental relation. She finds herself inscribed in a temporal horizon, but rather than being closed within it, she is constitutively open to eternity. In the next two sections, I aim to show how this fundamental ontology corresponds to Kierkegaard's claims about what the soul is such that it can be gained, and how it can be gained "in patience".

3. Strengthening in the Inner Being

Kierkegaard takes his inspiration for his three discourses on patience from Luke 21:19, which is translated in the text as "in your patience you will gain your souls". He begins the first discourse, "To Gain One's Soul in Patience", by asking just the kind of question a philosopher would ask: What does it mean to gain one's soul? Does not a person already possess his soul? Is having a soul not a necessary condition, or "presupposition", for personhood? Kierkegaard acknowledges that Jesus' claim seems like a contradiction since "one cannot simultaneously possess and gain the very same thing" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 163). He goes on to give some explanation of what it means to gain and to possess one's soul, but his explanation in this discourse is not as philosophically clear as one might hope. Fortunately, however, in another discourse written in the same year titled "Strengthening in the Inner Being", Kierkegaard more clearly establishes the notion of the soul that he repeats in the patience discourses, which makes it worthy of a brief textual detour.

Kierkegaard's main claim in "Strengthening in the Inner Being" is that the soul "announces its presence in *concern*", or that the experience of concern is what brings one's unique selfhood into view. However, as he sees it, concern can only produce self-differentiated awareness, or strengthening in one's inner being, if it is undergone in relation to God as the self's "witness". As we will see, this essential God-relation is one of the key ways kierkegaard is a hermeneutical thinker, though not exactly like Heidegger.

When a person is absorbed in the world around her, Kierkegaard describes her existence as "thoughtless". It is important to clarify that his negative association with "the world" is not latent Gnosticism, or the privileging of the spiritual over the material. What

Kierkegaard calls "the world" in these (and other) discourses represents a pre-theoretical, or pre-philosophical, consciousness—much like Heidegger's notion of the "they". To be caught up in the world is "thoughtlessly" to follow the norms, expectations, thrills, and trends of one's social context.

Kierkegaard rejects this kind of existence by arguing that God created humans to be his co-workers in creation (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 84). The philosophical significance of this claim is that humans have the capacity *and* the responsibility to reflect on our existence in the world and to exercise their agency meaningfully, or perhaps *virtuously*, within it. However, when the human person is absorbed in the "everyday", her inner being (or soul) is obscured, Ih is to say that her "capacity for comprehending and willing vanishes like a mist" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 85). Thus, Kierkegaard defines the soul-less person as one whose soul is dispersed among the things of the world, lacking self-differentiation and reflexive agency. To such a person, Kierkegaard says, the soul "announces its presence", or it makes itself known, in the moment of concern (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 86).

In concern, the self becomes troubled over herself, or she becomes a question to herself.[4] In such an experience, the self is "called" to give an account for herself as a unique entity and responsible agent in the world. Kierkegaard imagines this existential moment could be provoked by the experience of loss or potentially even gain—anything that interrupts the humdrum of the everyday to make reflection possible. Ultimately, Kierkegaard thinks the question of the self raised in the moment of concern cannot be addressed sufficiently by one's own self-reflection. It must be taken up in relation to God, whom he describes as the self's "witness". As he sees it, genuine self-consciousness only occurs in relation to that which is not the self—and not just any not-I but a Wholly Other not-I who sees the self even when she forgets, or "loses", herself, and who calls the self to concern for and about herself. In contrast to Heideggerian *angst*, which is the feeling of being "held out into the nothing" and exposed to the sheer contingency of being, Kierkegaardian concern simultaneously produces a recognition of one's finitude and fragility with the feeling of oneself as being held by God. It is through self-concern in relation to God as one's witness that the dispersed soul can be gathered, or one's inner being can be strengthened.

Interestingly, Heidegger includes the notion of "attestation" as a necessary condition for *Dasein* to recognize itself "as something for which authentic existence is possible" (Heidegger 1962, p. 312).[5] "Because *Dasein* is lost in the 'they'", Heidegger argues, "it must first *find* itself. In order to find *itself* at all, it must be 'shown' to itself in its possible authenticity. In terms of its possibility, Dasein *is* already a potentiality-for-Being-its-Self, but it needs to have this potentiality attested" (Heidegger 1962, p. 313). *Dasein* experiences attestation as a call, something that comes to the self as an appeal. However, on Heidegger's account, the call originates not from a divine Other, but from one's own internal voice of conscience (Heidegger 1962, pp. 319–25). Hence, while Heidegger removes the theological element in favor of Dasein's own self-attestation, he structurally preserves Kierkegaard's account of concern and witness (or attestation) as essential for the disclosure of the self to itself.[6]

If Kierkegaard could issue a reply to Heidegger, I imagine it would be quite similar to Edith Stein's critique, which is worth quoting at length:

If the call sounds as if it comes *upon* me, and not *from* me, this is explained by the authentic self being foreign compared to the self lost in the 'they.' What, however, testifies, against appearance, to the fact that the one called should also be the caller? As far as I can see, nothing does apart from the fundamental attitude that issues from and dominates the whole work: that the 'solus ipse' is distinguished above all other being, that it is that from what all answers concerning being is to be expected, the ultimate origin beyond which there is nothing further. The uninhibited investigation of this 'solus ipse', however, again and again comes up against references testifying to the fact that it is itself not the ultimate: not ultimately fundamental and not the ultimate light (Stein 2007, p. 74).

For Stein and Kierkegaard, a call cannot be a true call if it originates in the self but must come from "elsewhere". The problem with being one's own self-witness is it casts selfhood as coextensive with active self-attestation. That is, it is only in the moments of concern that the self is an authentic self because there is no other "ground" of selfhood beyond her own self-affirmation. Heidegger admits that these moments are rare, and so the self can be, and frequently is, lost to herself (Heidegger 1962, pp. 364–70). However, on the Kierkegaardian model, the self is sustained by God's attestation, even in the moments in which she is not in a state of active self-reflection. This does not mean that the self merely persists and that authentic selfhood does not require soul-awakening concern. It simply means that the self is not her own *sole* witness. She finds herself as always already seen by that which is beyond her before she sees.

Kierkegaard argues that the moment of concern provokes a craving for an "explanation", or desire for a greater sense of meaning for one's existence (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 87). These sorts of explanations, he says, are not reducible to gathering impersonal information or totalized knowledge about the world, nor are they merely self-construed assertions. Instead, understanding is given in relation to the soul's witness, namely, "the God who holds everything together in his eternal wisdom" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 87). I do not take this to be a "God of the transcendental gap" move on Kierkegaard's part, but a claim that the self's understanding cannot be self-derived. Confessedly under Kierkegaardian inspiration, Hans-Georg Gadamer explains that as "the other who breaks into my ego-centeredness and gives me something to understand" (Gadamer 1996, p. 46). Thus, one's understanding of oneself and the significance of one's existence in the world is not a self-made product but always comes in reference to that which is beyond oneself—that which is eternal and unlimited. Hence, there is a structural openness to eternity in the Kierkegaardian self's fundamental ontology which, as I will argue in the next section, provides the philosophical architecture for Kierkegaard's description of patience.

4. Patience: A Hermeneutical Virtue?

Having outlined a Kierkegaardian hermeneutical notion of selfhood, we are now positioned to trace the connection Kierkegaard makes between gaining one's soul and the virtue of patience. In this third section of my argument, I examine each of the three patience discourses. In the first, "To Gain One's Soul in Patience", Kierkegaard discusses how in patience one gains one's soul from God away from the world. In the second, "To Preserve One's Soul in Patience", he argues that patience is necessary for the persistence of the soul across time. Finally, in "Patience in Expectancy", Kierkegaard examines the phenomenon of patience in the life of Anna the Prophetess, describing it as a virtuous, or spiritually excellent, way of inhabiting the world and time.

4.1. To Gain One's Soul in Patience

Kierkegaard says of patience that it is "a poor art, and yet it is very long" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 159). Patience does not show up as a heroic virtue, as perhaps courage or love do, but as "a soft breeze and the incorruptible essence of a quiet spirit" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 159). While his account of patience initially seems to fit within the virtue ethics tradition, I hope to show that he is offering something more than what virtue ethics typically entails. Methodologically, he approaches patience not in terms of its behavioral characteristics or necessary criteria but by the way it appears phenomenally in temporal experience. He then describes patience as a particular way of inhabiting the world that enhances our capacity not just for authentic but for *virtuous* reflective self-consciousness and agency within it.

Before explaining what he thinks patience is, Kierkegaard clarifies what patience is not. Firstly, patience is not something you can teach another person by passing on information about it or even determining a settled theory (Kierkegaard 1992, pp. 159–60). Patience is not acquired through information, no matter how many discourses you read about it. It is, in the words of J. Aaron Simmons, "a matter of practice rather than pure theory, of enactment rather than conception, and of becoming rather than being" (Simmons

Forthcoming). Even if someone had a bullet-proof definition of what patience is, patience intellectually understood does not a soul make.

Another error would be to value patience only insofar as it allows you to attain what you desire in life. At the level of common sense, people understand that some degree of patience is needed for any endeavor, from fishing to parenting (Kierkegaard 1992, pp. 160–61). Yet, commonsense patience is an *instrumental* virtue, or a means to achieve some other end. If it is an instrumental virtue, then it is also a *relative* virtue. There may be situations in which I determine that impatience would provide the better way for me to achieve my desired outcome. Hence, patience is only valuable when it is deemed expedient or strategic for a determinate end. Presumably, when that end is accomplished, patience is no longer needed. As Andrew Burgess notes, common sense will consider it "often good to have some patience, but things would be going better all around if it were not necessary" (Burgess 2000, p. 207). Even if this view of patience has practical value, it does not present the kind of patience by which to gain one's soul.

In response to both of these erroneous notions of patience, Kierkegaard points out that the claim in the Gospel is not "through" or "by means of patience" you gain your soul, but "in patience", which suggests that "the condition stands in a special relation to the conditioned" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 167). That is, patience does not merely describe a particular behavior, such as the ability to wait without complaint or to resist aborting a project prematurely, but it is formative of the person. "The person who grows in patience does indeed grow and develop", Kierkegaard writes. "What is it that grows in him? It is patience. Consequently, patience grows in him, and how does it grow? Through patience" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 168).

Up to this point, Kierkegaard's description of patience seems classically Aristotelian, or at least in line with the virtue ethics tradition. However, if we settle on this line of interpretation, then we would have to say that Kierkegaard's claim—that in patience one gains one's soul—simply refers to personal formation. On this account, patience would be a trait or characteristic that adheres to the person, which would make it soul-shaping but not soul-gaining in a constitutive sense. Without excluding the validity of such an interpretation, my task in this essay is to see if a hermeneutical approach might open a way to understand the role of patience for gaining, not just shaping, one's soul.[7]

After discussing what patience is not, Kierkegaard opens a discussion on the soul. "The soul is the contradiction of the temporal and the eternal", he writes (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 163). This is an earlier and less comprehensive formulation of the self than Anti-Climacus offers. Nevertheless, the constitutive element or ontological structure of the self highlighted in this discourse is the "contradiction" between the temporal and the eternal. It is important to note that by "contradiction" he is not referring to a logical contradiction but rather an irreconcilable tension between contrasting elements. As Kierkegaard sees it, the contradiction between possessing and gaining one's soul lies not in possessing and gaining the same thing at the same time, but in the soul itself. "Therefore", he continues, "the same thing can be possessed and the same thing gained and at the same time. Indeed, what is more, if the soul is this contradiction, it can be possessed only in such a way that it is gained and gained in such a way that it is possessed" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 163).

To explain this so-called contradiction, Kierkegaard offers an illustration: "One who comes naked into the world possesses nothing, but the one who comes into the world in the nakedness of his soul does nevertheless possess his soul, that is, as something that is to be gained, does not have it outside himself as something new that is to be possessed" (Kierkegaard 1992, pp. 163–64). The metaphor of the "naked soul" conveys that a person is not soul-less when she is born. That is, she does not come into the world with the need to obtain a soul like one would a car or a house. Rather, a soul is something one receives as needing to be cultivated in the same way that one receives life but enters into it naked. Hence, there is a fundamental givenness to existence. It is not something we initiate but, as Heidegger says, something we are "thrown" into. However, if it is the case that the soul "can be possessed only in such a way that it is gained", then there must be

something more to the soul than the given—something that must be *gained*. Hence, the "contradiction" between possessing and gaining the same thing at the same time functions like a hermeneutical circle between facticity and freedom, contingency and creativity.

In fact, if human beings were not hermeneutically embedded creatures, then "losing one's soul" would not be the existential threat that Kierkegaard takes it to be in these discourses. That is, if the soul is merely something given, then there would not be much at stake in the way one relates to the world. However, taking inspiration from Jesus' claim in Matthew 16:26 that it is better to lose the world than to lose one's soul, Kierkegaard associates the loss of the soul with being possessed by "the world". As in his earlier discourse, "the world" is described as a soul-sucking place where that singularity becomes lost in the shallow-minded masses.[8] Through social achievement or economic success, one might think that she possesses the world; however, as Kierkegaard says, "the world can only be possessed by its possessing me" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 164).

Kierkegaard argues that if the soul were not "heterogenous to the life of the world", it could never be gained away from the world (Kierkegaard 1992, pp. 171–72). In other words, if the soul did not have a given distinctiveness from the world but was simply a product of it, there would be no possibility of genuine self-differentiation and meaningful agency within the world. It is possible for a person to gain her soul "away from the world", Kierkegaard says, if she "senses a resistance that does not follow the movements of the world's life" and allows this resistance to become "more and more pronounced" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 165). Here, Kierkegaard repeats the basic claim he makes in "Strengthening in the Inner Being", namely, that in concern the self is pulled out of the current of the world and her subjectivity is awakened in relation to God, her witness. Concern does not remove her from the world, but it allows her to indwell it in a different way—a way that he next will describe as *virtuous*.

More than repeating his earlier claims in "Strengthening in the Inner Being", in this discourse Kierkegaard adds a layer to this analysis of the soul. He argues that the process of gaining one's soul from the world through God is performed in *patience*. "The gaining can have no other presupposition than this insignificant 'patience', and this again in such a way that it is not, but becomes", he says (Kierkegaard 1992, pp. 171–72). Thus, there is a given distinctiveness of the soul which makes it gainable away from the world and not merely reducible to it. However, gaining reflexive self-awareness and meaningful agency comes not only through a moment of concern but through *patiently sustained* concern—the kind that does not just come and go in what Heidegger calls rare "moments of vision" but that is maintained as a way of being before God and as a way of being in the world. Indeed, if we think about this task in terms of Anti-Climacus' formulation of the self in *SUD*, patience operates on the second layer of relationality where the self actively maintains the harmonious balance between its constitutive elements. Patience is another term, or a way of describing, the hermeneutical self's healthy self-regulation. Patience allows the self to pursue meaningful agency in the world as a singular self-differentiated subject constituted by both necessity and freedom, finitude and infinitude. Indeed, if patience was to be set aside, the soul would become dispersed in the current of the world and would fall into one kind of despair or another. Patience also operates on the third layer of relationality as the self exists before God, the Power that called her into existence and that has called her to the lifelong task of selfhood. Resisting the pull of the current of the world and then learning how to live creatively and responsibly within it is not a one-time or even an occasional event, but a challenging task of a lifetime. Gaining one's soul should not be thought of as an achievement or a conquest, but as a "quiet unflagging activity", which is what Kierkegaard calls patience (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 170). Thus, it is in patience that you gain your soul.

4.2. To Preserve One's Soul in Patience

"To preserve the soul in patience", Kierkegaard writes, is "to keep the soul bound together in patience" so that it does not become lost in "the long battle with an indefatigable enemy, *time*, and with a multifarious enemy, *the world*" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 192). Thus,

for Kierkegaard, there are two identifiable threats to the soul: the world and time. Patience is necessary to resist both. I showed above how Kierkegaard's first discourse on patience focuses on the necessity of patience to gain one's soul from the world in order to live meaningfully and purposefully within it. In that discourse, he analyzed patience by attending to it as a way of being in space, or in the world. In the second discourse, "To Preserve One's Soul in Patience", Kierkegaard offers an analysis of patience that attends to it as a way of being in time. Here, too, patience operates at the level of the constitution of the self as it describes the conscious maintenance of the synthesis between two of the self's constitutive structures: temporality and eternity. Patience, hermeneutically understood, is a very intense and admittedly challenging way the self indwells the temporal In a way that is open to the fullness of eternity.

In temporality, things continually come and go. What was gained at one point is easily lost the next. What we assumed would last falls apart. Amid this uncertainty, human beings want to hold onto something as a way of maintaining our own sense of continuity. If we select something temporal to possess in this way—say, one's career or a relationship—we find ourselves continually subject to a loss of self as those things come and go beyond our control. Therefore, Kierkegaard reasons that the possession by which we preserve ourselves across time would have to be something eternal, "and what else could that be but a person's soul?" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 185). The soul represents the living unity of the self who is inscribed in the temporal but who belongs (in the sense I describe above) to the eternal. By making "eternity" an essential structural feature of the self, Kierkegaard is disclosing an essential relation between the self and the Eternal, one that goes beyond Heidegger's strictly temporalized account of beings-toward-death. The soul is situated in time; unlike all other temporal objects, the soul also has an eternal dimension that transcends time. Hence, the soul is situated in time but endures not in the mode of being-toward-death, as Heidegger would have it, but in the mode of being-toward-eternity. Thus, the soul can suffer the loss of temporally contingent things and still endure if, in patience, the self does not allow itself to be "dispersed" with the temporal things of the world but maintains a posture of "concern" before God that carries the soul above them. Understood thusly, patience is not merely a secondary quality of the person but how the healthy tension of the self's temporal/eternal structure is maintained.

To buttress his claim that the soul is preserved in patience, Kierkegaard describes how the soul can be lost in time through impatience. One of the ways he expresses the temporal element of patience is by repeatedly using the metaphor of the young person growing old. Youthful zeal often "only has ears for impatience" because it makes appealing promises, such as quick results and certain successes. What patience has to say, however, is usually not what the ambitious young person wants to hear: "no man can add a cubit to his stature even if he were concerned about it, no man can take what has not been given to him" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 189). By saying this, patience is not trying to "kill the soul" or squash youthful dreams. If anything, Kierkegaard thinks it is *impatience* that whispers to the young person "time is running out", alerting her to the increasing likelihood that her hopes will have to be abandoned. When impatience determines that time has come, he says, it "sighs its last anxious sigh: It is too late" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 200).

But patience, rather than renouncing possibility, "strengthens the heart with the strong nourishment of truth" by redirecting one's gaze from the fulfillment (or even the non-fulfillment) of particular wishes to the recognition that "to be even the most insignificant and inferior of human beings and to be true to oneself is much more than to become the greatest and most powerful by means of the shabby partiality of the wish" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 190). Thus, Kierkegaard affirms that patience always has an object, or an end toward which it is directed. However, if the object of fulfillment is a particular wish, or something "coveted", as he puts it in the previous discourse, then one's patience is instrumental. It is contingent upon the contingency of the wish. For this reason, Kierkegaard is adamant that the object of true patience must be the Eternal. Patience invites temporal beings to extend

their gaze beyond particular fulfillments to a greater telos, the fullness of eternity, and to keep it there across the course of time.

To be clear, making the Eternal the object of our patience does not mean we should punt all our hopes into an other-worldly afterlife that has little to no connection to *this* life, patiently awaiting the sweet by-and-by.[9] Kierkegaard presents patience as a virtue that allows the self to exist within present non-fulfillment with expectancy toward future promises only God can fulfill. Thus, patience says, "today we shall do this, tomorrow that, God willing" not because it is tentative or cynical, but because it recognizes that "God in heaven swears by himself, as scripture says, because he has nothing higher by which to swear, but human purpose swears by God, and if it swears by itself, it swears by something inferior" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 191). Thus, the problem is not with having big dreams or bold pursuits but, as Kierkegaard says, with arrogantly turning one's nose up and touching one's head to the heavens, assuming that life is something one can simply grab by the horns and make happen. As Rudd aptly states, patience does not require we relinquish our projects or engage in them "half-heartedly", but does ask us not to take them "with ultimate seriousness" (Rudd 2008, p. 501).[10]

Thus, when care "makes the young person's knees tremble and [her] arm weak, who, then, is the loving figure in whom [she] finds rest? It is patience" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 191). After the young person has run herself into the ground with her projects managed by determinate timelines, patience is there as a Good Samaritan to dress her wounds (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 199). Patience accompanies the youth down paths she never envisioned for herself and tenderly reconciles her to life, even if it is a life burdened with loss and fettered by lack. "Patience does not keep company with despair's mockery", Kierkegaard states, "which smiles at purpose as at a childish prank, does not keep company with the miserableness of the understanding that makes purpose petty, since the purpose that makes up its mind to act with the help of God is certainly not petty!" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 192).

Kierkegaard describes patience as a "quiet alertness" that brings comfort in the present and promises victory in the future. Patience reminds finite beings, young and old, of their finitude and dependence on that which is beyond them. Across the uncertainties of temporal existence, Kierkegaard calls patience the soul's constant companion "in faith's covenant with the eternal, in hope's covenant with the future, and love's covenant with God and human beings" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 192). Thus, patience temporally frames a person's existence by steading her in love in the present with hopeful openness to not just the future but to the Eternal.

5. The Venerable Anna

Kierkegaard's first discourse argues that in patience one gains one's soul away from the *world* in relation to God, and the second argues that in patience one preserves one's soul in *time* by binding oneself to the Eternal. In his third and final discourse, Kierkegaard offers an extended description of the way both the social and the temporal dimensions of patience appear in the life of Anna the Prophetess. I will argue that by presenting her as a widow and a prophetess, Kierkegaard shows how her life is hermeneutically structured by patience and expectancy. Patience situates her in the present while expectancy opens her not just to the future but to the eternal. In Anna's case, her expectancy was not directed toward the future end of the temporal horizon, but toward the coming of the Eternal into the temporal. I will show that Kierkegaard highlights in Anna's life what Heidegger later calls the three ecstasies of time, past, present, and future, or what Augustine, centuries prior, refers to as time's distention in the soul through memory, presence, and anticipation (Augustine 1997, XI.26). As a widow and a prophetess, Anna remains rooted in the present, bearing the weight of the lack and loss it contains, while having a posture of expectancy toward a future—a future that ultimately only the eternal could provide. Anna exemplifies an intense and challenging way of inhabiting time, one that requires heightened self-

conscious awareness and reflexive agency (or strengthening in the inner being) and one which Kierkegaard hails as virtuous.

5.1. Gaining and Preserving Her Soul

Referencing Christian revelation, specifically God's promise of the coming Messiah in Genesis 3:15, Kierkegaard claims that this was the expectancy "that was in the world as early as man learned to understand it" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 207). For generations, the faithful "rejoiced in the vision and from afar hailed the future event, the nonappearance of which even made them guests and aliens on earth". Centuries went by, and then came "the fullness of time" when the Expected One was born and the eternal came into the temporal. When the Christ-child was forty days old, his parents took him to the temple to be presented to the Lord. According to Luke's gospel, there were two witnesses present: Simeon and Anna. These two prophets recognized this child as the Expected One, even though he came in a way no one had been expecting. Between the two of them, Kierkegaard chooses to make Anna the subject of attention as his model of patience in expectancy.

Kierkegaard begins his description of Anna's life by noticing that, according to Luke, she was a widow who was well advanced in years at the time of this event. Indeed, she had been quite young when "her life was broken off early" by her husband's death. Of course, she was free to remarry, but she chose not to. Anticipating criticism of Anna's decision, Kierkegaard prohibits his readers from judging her: "Eighteen centuries and more have passed; she does not need our help now any more than she needed it then" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 209). We should not be quick to diagnose her with despair or determine that by not moving forward with her life she is refusing to do the work of mourning. Instead, Kierkegaard asks his readers to suspend their judgment in order to take Anna as an object of contemplation. Only then might we learn something from her.

There are many reasons why Anna might have chosen to remarry. If she had found a new husband, in some sense it might have "made up for" or even "redeemed" the tragedy of her past. Her sorrow and loss would be replaced with joy and gain in the present. Not only would she have a future full of prospects (such as children and grandchildren) but having a new family would carry forward her legacy and her memory beyond her death. In this way, her temporal life would have had lasting significance, and she would have had a rich identity and strong social standing as a wife, mother, and grandmother. However, by choosing to remain a widow, Anna went without these social comforts and even would have found herself in an isolated and vulnerable position.

If we map Kierkegaard's formulation of how the soul is gained onto Anna's social situation, we could interpret the death of her husband as her moment of "concern" by which her singular soul announced itself before God as her former "world" receded. Rather than plunging back into that world, Anna resisted the current by choosing instead to remain "alone" as herself before God. I do not think Kierkegaard's point is that getting remarried is less virtuous than remaining a widow or that singleness protects the soul from being obscured by social roles and other conformities. Instead, Kierkegaard shows how Anna did not lose herself in her husband's death, nor did she seek a new self through other temporal comforts. Her decision to remain a widow was a choice to "remain true to herself" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 209). Thus, Kierkegaard says, "Every external bond was dissolved and only that love bound her in which she had her freedom and without which she would not have known herself again" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 209). By remaining a widow and living the rest of her days serving in the temple—a location that is symbolically "distinct" from the world—Kierkegaard says her life became very "poor" in temporal variety but "rich in the Eternal" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 209). Thus, Kierkegaard presents Anna as someone who resisted the enticement of impatience to find her solace and sense of self in comfortable social roles and achievements. Instead, in patience, that quiet, unflagging activity, she gained her soul away from the world in relation to God.

On my reading, Anna's widow status signifies not only a lifetime of patiently gaining her soul away from the world but also her way of being in time—a way of being that he will

associate with the virtue of patience. According to Kierkegaard, Anna holds her husband in loving recollection, preserving him in "an always present memory" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 210). Though Kierkegaard does not philosophically elaborate beyond this comment, it seems that Anna's choice to remain a widow tells us that rather than "erasing" the tragedy of the past by finding a new thing, she gathers up her past into her present. Her past remains active in the present rather than nullified, which is what Heidegger rather convolutedly calls "having-been-ness" (*Gewesenheit*), which he describes as a disposedness that "first makes possible finding yourself" (Heidegger 1962, p. 340).

Following the tradition of Augustine, Heidegger criticizes the Aristotelian-derived idea of time as a linear and infinite series of "now-points". Such a model privileges the present, understanding the past as the no-longer-now and the future as the not-yet-now. Yet, Heidegger attempts to replace this "vulgar" conception of time, what we might call "clock time", with what he calls "primordial time". Primordial time is experienced as three ecstasies—past, present, and future—which are grasped as a phenomenal unity (Heidegger 1962, p. 329). This temporal unity is the underlying ontological structure of *Dasein* as a whole, which is to say that temporality is what frames *Dasein*'s very existence. Unlike inauthentic *Dasein*, who forgets itself in the temporal flux of everydayness, authentic *Dasein* always runs ahead of itself through anticipating (*Vorlaufen*) while also reaching back to its past in repetition (*Wiederholung*) for resoluteness through the present moment of vision (*Augenblick*). *Dasein*'s having-been-ness means that its past is left behind but that it is carried into the present. This does not mean that we are determinately defined by our pasts, but that we bear them into the present, and that there would be no sense of future without them. Thus, as Stephan Käufer explains, for Heidegger, disposedness "is made possible by the ordinary past, that you *are* your beenness. What you *are*, as Dasein, is ability-to-be, and ability-to-be is always disposed, always finds itself already in a situation" (Käufer 2013, p. 352).

Heidegger's analysis of temporality sheds light on Anna's widow status as a symbol of her disposedness, or her having-been-ness, and it gives a philosophical explanation for why Kierkegaard associates it with her remaining true to herself. Remarriage, for Anna, would have been a means of nullifying the past. Because selfhood is framed by the three ecstasies of time, if she had simply "moved on", she would have broken off her past and her soul would have become temporally dispersed. On the other hand, while Anna remained faithful to her past, she did not enclose herself in it. If she had, she would have experienced the dispersion of her soul in time with respect to her present and her future. As Kierkegaard says, she would not have been "God's choice to appear as the witness of expectancy in the hour when the expectancy of the human race had its fulfillment" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 210). Instead, she remained in the present, bearing with what has been lost, while looking for that which has not yet been given. This is the hermeneutical virtue of patience, and by indwelling time in this way, Anna preserved her soul.

5.2. Anna's Expectancy

Kierkegaard insists that what we see in Anna is genuine expectancy, which is to be distinguished from hopeful optimism. We all know people whose expectancies never seem to be disappointed, he says. Their lives are largely tragedy-free and everything seems to come easy. They seem to have been dealt the lucky hand in life and have good reason to be optimistic. However, according to Kierkegaard, such people are in such "busy service" they allow themselves "not a moment's quiet" but fragment their souls in "multifarious expectancies, expected now one thing, now another" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 211). As their expectancies are increasingly multiplied and scattered across time, their souls are fragmented and dispersed along with them. As such, "the expectancy" (that is, the expectancy of the eternal) is "out of the question", Kierkegaard claims (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 211).

But Anna is different. Her dreams were disappointed early on, and in response she became rich in true expectancy. I do not take this claim to mean that a greater good came

out of Anna's tragedy that sufficiently justified it. Her loss remained a loss that she bore for the rest of her life. However, her loss suggests her expectancy should not be mistaken for naïve optimism or youthful enthusiasm. Anna had once been young and "had known the optimism of youth", but if a person "does not know life's dangers—[her] courage is only scarcely praiseworthy foolhardiness, and the person who does not know life's deceit—[her] expectancy is only an intoxication of dreams" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 212). Anna was well acquainted with the contingencies and uncertainties of life—so acquainted that she set her expectancy on something beyond what can be gained or even determined by herself in the temporal, that which can only be provided by the Eternal.

Moreover, Anna was neither young nor married, which, from a commonsense perspective, does not exactly make her the picture of "fruitfulness". Considering that she was quickly sliding down the back end of her life, one might wonder why she did not spend her remaining years cherishing what she had rather than continuing to expect what is to come. But Anna's expectancy was not directed toward her ownmost future possibilities, which indeed were diminishing, but toward the possibilities the Eternal will introduce through the Messiah. Therefore, although she was well on in years and her mind "among the graves", Kierkegaard describes Anna as the Eternal's "young fiancée" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 211).

To be expectant for the Eternal does not mean to have crystallized expectations for exactly "what" the fulfillment of divine promise (or just "the good" more generally) will look like, and certainly not "how" or "when" it will come to be. If Anna had watched with such certainty, she would not have recognized the Messiah when she saw him, as he did not come in a way that fulfilled any of those expectations. Yet, Anna was able to recognize the Messiah because her expectancy was directed toward the "who" behind the fulfillment, the Promiser behind the promise. Her expectancy was neither empty indeterminacy nor over-determinacy with respect to the future, but a humble hermeneutical openness that "rested in eternity's assurance that *it must happen*" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 217).

When eulogizing Anna, Kierkegaard frequently uses prose that plays on the different ecstasies of time, showing how they are unified in her existence precisely because of her openness to the Eternal. He says she is "occupied with recollection and nevertheless is expectant". She exhibits a "gentleness that is reconciled to life and nevertheless is expectant". She has a "devout heart that covets nothing more and nevertheless is waiting in suspense" (Kierkegaard 1992, pp. 211–12). Thus, Anna's expectancy finds its ultimate futural projection beyond the temporal horizon in the fulfillment only the Eternal can provide. That expectancy is what sustains her capacity to patiently endure the weight of the present and gives her a "quiet integrity" of soul, or strength in the inner being.

5.3. Anna's Patience in Expectancy

Having presenting Anna as a figure of expectancy, Kierkegaard further clarifies that she is not just expectant but she is *patiently* expectant, which is not to be confused with common human endurance. Each person has an "original natural power of endurance", which can be different for different people, Kierkegaard says. However, "as soon as the fulfillment fails to come for such a long time that this original power is consumed and exhausted, then and only then will it become manifest whether a person has new oil in readiness, only then will his patience in expectancy become manifest" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 213). When one's natural supply of endurance is exhausted, that is when the struggle begins. At that point, one might sink into despair, concluding that time is up and God has forgotten about them. Once that conclusion is made, one's patience expires.

To such a person, Kierkegaard responds "quit all this calculating in which you trap yourself" and "once again cast all your sorrow upon the Lord and throw yourself upon his love. Up out of this sea, expectancy rises reborn again and sees heaven open—reborn, no, newborn, for this heavenly expectancy begins precisely when the earthly expectancy sinks down powerless and in despair" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 214). Human calculation might help a person discern how much of her limited supply of endurance she can afford to give

a certain project, but when it comes to the work of the Eternal, human calculation falls woefully short.

Unlike human endurance, what Kierkegaard calls patience in expectancy is only possible by help from that which is beyond the self. Kierkegaard insists "it is the expectancy itself, its essence, that determines whether a person is patient" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 220). If the expectancy is for something temporal, then most likely what one might call an exercise in patience is really just an exercise in human endurance. But Kierkegaard contends that true expectancy "pertains to a person essentially and does not leave it up to his own power to bring about the fulfillment" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 221). For this reason, he believes that every truly expectant person is expectant in relation to God, or that an essential condition of genuine expectancy is that it be directed beyond the temporal toward the Eternal (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 221).

Unlike human endurance, patience in expectancy does not expire because, in Kierkegaard's words, it maintains the recognition that "even at the last moment there is a possibility, or rather there is no last moment before it is passed" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 215). Anna's expectancy is guided and sustained by patience, not probability, which gives her the agential capacity, or the strength in her inner being, to bear the weight of the present while awaiting the fulfillment of the Eternal. Thus, as Kierkegaard sees it, patience and expectancy correspond to one another. They are inter-related and even inter-defined. Patience without expectancy is aimless, and expectancy without patience is reckless, which is why there is a "like for like in the friendship that is to be continued" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 220).

5.4. Anna's Patient and Expectant Present

Another feature of Anna's story that Kierkegaard recounts is how she endured the present before "the fullness of time" came. He states repeatedly that she did not leave the temple but faithfully served night and day through fasting and prayer. Through these practices, Anna kept her expectancy alive, preserving it "in all patience and forbearance with joy" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 222). By remaining in the temple fasting and praying night and day, Anna is fulfilling a prophetic vocation. These practices rooted her in the "already" while directing her longing toward the "yet-to-come".

From a human perspective, Kierkegaard admits that fasting and prayer seem like useless activities that accomplish nothing. Prayer appears to be talking into the air and fasting only "consumes earthly energy and gives no strength to endure in expectancy" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 222). However, Kierkegaard insists that prayer and fasting are the only way to "cast out" the deeply ingrained and alluring tendency of impatience. Though he does not make this connection explicitly, I suggest that fasting and prayer counterpose impatience by mirroring the structure of patience and expectancy. To fast is to abstain from something that provides a sense of fullness and to place oneself intentionally in a tangible state of lack. Thus, fasting requires the exercise of patience, but fasting also teaches us what patience is like. It intensifies our awareness of the present and asks us to bear with the loss and lack therein instead of fleeing it by denial or distraction. Like patience, fasting is a quiet, unflagging activity.

Prayer, on the other hand, is an exercise in expectancy. Prayer is a practice of radical openness to a power that is beyond the self, or a phenomenally intensified state of being-before-God. In the words of Jean-Louis Chrétien, prayer is an "act of presence" that "puts man thoroughly at stake, in all dimensions of his being", including, we might add, his temporal dimensions. Prayer is not a soliloquy but is an act in which "I turn myself toward an other and say 'you' to that other" (Chrétien 2000, p. 152). Kierkegaard's last of the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* is dedicated to the topic of prayer. There, he admits that praying "seems like the very opposite of struggling", a "cowardly and fainthearted business left to women and children, whereas struggling is to a man's liking" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 378). However, prayer is a struggle not "with a weapon of war, but on the contrary the quiet pursuit of peace; prayer is the weapon not of the one who attacks another or

of one who defends himself but of one who yields" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 378). True prayer is a yielding of oneself to God in one's inner being. In praying this way—"praying aright"—the one praying is always victorious not because she has changed God's mind but because she has been given "new oil for the lamp of expectancy" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 398). For Kierkegaard, the one from whom we learn to pray in this way is Anna, a woman who, far from being cowardly and fainthearted, he calls "venerable and highly exalted" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 224).

Both fasting and prayer are individuating acts that require intensive reflective self-consciousness and purposeful agency, which means they produce heightened subjectivity or a sense of selfhood. By persisting in these spiritual practices, Anna's patience is, as Kierkegaard says, "just as active as it is passive, and just as passive as it is active" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 187). In prayer and fasting, one employs her agency while simultaneously coming to the very edge of her agential capacities in order to open herself to God and await provision. By persisting in prayer and fasting, Anna's inner being was strengthened to bear with the "not-yets" of the present and to await what-is-yet-to-come, namely, the Expected One.

5.5. What If Anna Had Remarried?

On my reading, by highlighting Anna's choice not to remarry and her vocation as a prophet, Kierkegaard is not asserting the moral superiority of being a widow or of dedicating one's life to service in the temple the way Anna did. Instead, Anna's widowhood represents a soul gained *from* the world, *through* God, *by* herself (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 167). As a prophet, Anna preserved her soul by giving up "her earthly expectancy" and binding her soul "to the eternal alone" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 217). By holding her husband in loving recollection, she brings her past into relief in her present, and by expecting the Eternal, she stretches herself forward beyond her own temporal horizon.

Had Anna had remarried, Kierkegaard hypothesizes that she would have "speedily [recovered] from the pain and loss of her husband" and he would have experienced "in a still more beautiful sense being called mother" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 225). Perhaps she still would have been in the temple that day with her aged husband at her side rather than Simeon, witnessing their grandchild being presented. Perhaps that would have been the fulfillment which allowed her to then depart in peace. Had that been Anna's story, Kierkegaard imagines she would have been beloved and remembered for several generations, but then she would have been forgotten (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 225). Yet Anna, the one who lost her husband early and remained childless and alone, is remembered across the ages as a model of patience in expectancy. Surely, Anna did not choose this path as a "legacy move", for nothing about her decision promised any kind of temporal significance. Anna was faithful, and her faithfulness is what made her life more fruitful than she could have realized.

From Anna, we learn that expectancy "is not the fruit of temporality but that awakens only in the person who gave up the temporal in order to gain the Eternal and then found the grace to see eternity as expectancy in time" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 218). Expectancy in time—remaining steadfast in the present, bearing within it the grief of loss and the emptiness of the not-yet, while eagerly awaiting the work of the Eternal—that is the hermeneutical virtue of patience.

6. Conclusions

In this essay, I have attempted to show an essential philosophical connection in Kierkegaard's patience discourses between the virtue of patience and gaining one's soul. I achieved this by showing how Kierkegaardian selfhood and the virtue of patience are presented in distinctly hermeneutical terms. From Anti-Climacus' technical description in *SUD* to Kierkegaard's earlier descriptions in his 1843–1844 *Upbuilding Discourses*, we see consistent constitutive elements of the self. I have argued that these elements are best understood not as a metaphysical substance nor as existential metaphors, but as a fundamental ontology

which is capable of articulating both the gift and the task of selfhood. I then connected this concept of the self with his notion of the "soul" in the 1843–1844 *Upbuilding Discourses*, which provided a philosophical framework for what it could mean to gain and preserve one's soul and how the virtue of patience might be an essential feature of that process. The culmination of Kierkegaard's insights on patience as a soul-gaining hermeneutical virtue is found in his description of Anna. I argued that her life exhibits a way of inhabiting time that is structured according to the inter-related virtues of patience and expectancy. Thus, patience, for Kierkegaard, is far more than a trait or behavior. It is a way of being with respect to the world and to time which awakens and preserves the soul. Patience, therefore, is a hermeneutical virtue—a way of being that is not just authentic, but virtuous.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 Anthony Rudd makes a similar assertion in (Rudd 2008, p. 499).

2 As a point of technical clarification, I am interpreting the "givenness" of the self along hermeneutical lines as "transcendental structures" or "fundamental ontology" of the self. This is not to dismiss substance ontology (as I say above) but is simply reflective of the differing ways of discussing "essence" in the metaphysical vs. phenomenological schools. The difference between the two requires a much longer historical and philosophical explanation than this paper allows; however, it is important to signal here that there are different concepts of "essence" at work in substance ontology and fundamental ontology. Both are interested in getting at that which is objective about human beings, whether that be substance or structures, but the phenomenological–hermeneutical interrogation seeks to arrive at objectivity via subjectivity, or it proceeds with a first-personal interrogation in order to find third-personal answers. For a helpful introduction and overview of the differences, see especially chapter 1 in (Simmons and Benson 2013).

3 Patrick Stokes (2022), "From Here to Eternity: Soteriological Selves and Time", 63–66 argues that Anti-Climacus' description is not freight with metaphysically dualist assumptions, at least as they are presented in Descartes.

4 Augustine offers a very similar description of the experience of being a problem to oneself, provoking self-reflection. He too claims that coming to know oneself, or gaining reflexive self-awareness and meaningful agency, is not the result of reflection because we are always opaque to ourselves and reflection alone cannot cut through layers of self-deception. Thus, the question of the self must always be taken up in relation to God, the one who sees through our hearts. Augustine, *Confessions*, X.33.

5 I want to acknowledge a growing concern about drawing from Heidegger's thought given his horrific racism and anti-semitism which he expressed (inter)personally, professionally, and philosophically and give an explicit account for why and how I am presenting him in this paper. Heidegger is indispensable for my argument in this paper simply because he formally initiated and is most obviously associated with the "hermeneutical turn". He established the terminology and methods that are most familiar to those of us today who are on the other side of that turn. However, while Heidegger is used as a resource in this paper, he is mostly presented as a foil. Over the course of the essay, I show that Kierkegaard did what Heidegger did *before* him and *better* than him—and now offers us ways of going beyond Heidegger's (theoretically) non-normative description to robust hermeneutical considerations of virtue. I claim below that his departure from Kierkegaard's thought represents the weakest points in his own philosophy. I intentionally draw Edith Stein into the conversation, not only because she provides a well-articulated critique of Heidegger, but also because historical accounts indicate she suffered personally and professionally, likely at least partially on account of Heidegger's racism.

6 With reference to Heidegger's own confession in *Being and Time*, George Pattison argues he was especially influenced by Kierkegaard's *Upbuilding Discourses* and that there is more of a philosophical agenda in them than one might assume for discourses that present themselves as devotional. See (Pattison 2002, pp. 1–3). However, Sean McGrath proposes that Heidegger's apparently Godless anthropology is a modification of Augustine, perhaps more so than Kierkegaard. This may be correct; however, given how little he cites other thinkers, it is impossible to trace with confidence Heidegger's philosophical inspirations. Nevertheless, there is a strong family resemblance between Augustine's theological anthropology and Kierkegaard's as well as their ways of thinking about time and eternity (McGrath 2008, p. 321).

7 I want to note that my intention is not to delegitimize third-personal accounts of virtue but simply to offer another analytical approach to investigating virtue that could contribute to the tradition. Contrasts that I make between a hermeneutical approach and other approaches are simply for the purpose of clarifying what is unique about it and arguing for what I consider its strengths to be.

[8] Anti-Climacus also talks about the idea of losing one's soul to the world because the world is a place in which the self is obscured. "It may not be detected that in a deeper sense he lacks a self". Such things do not create much of a stir in the world, for a self is the last thing the world cares about and the most dangerous thing of all for a person to show signs of having. The greatest hazard of all, losing the self, can occur very quietly in the world, as if it were nothing at all. No other loss can occur so quietly; any other loss—an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife etc.—is sure to be noticed (*SUD*, 32–33). Of course, by losing the self he does not mean that the self has gotten rid of itself. After all, "a person cannot rid himself of the relation to himself any more than he can rid himself of this self" (*SUD*, 17), and the desire to do this is a form of despair. So the self cannot erase itself and start from scratch—it cannot rid itself of its given self—however, it can forget itself by getting caught up in the everyday and refuse the task of cultivating itself. This is what losing one's soul to the world means: a denial of the given and the abnegation of the task.

[9] Considering the model of Anna alone, there are reasons not to read Kierkegaard's claims about eternity as strictly other-worldly, or as an expression of a radically disjointed two kingdoms eschatology. Theologically speaking, her life is a testimony to the incarnation, the Eternal breaking into the temporal as an act of radical redemption and promise of a future full of redemption. Nevertheless, it would be equally inappropriate to ascribe to Kierkegaard an imminent eschatology on the basis of this model. Neither interpretation would accord with the active tensions present in Kierkegaard's description of the self as both temporal and eternal, and his description of Anna shows a life that neither absolutizes this world nor abdicates it in favor of the next.

[10] Rudd in (Rudd 2008, p. 503) also adds that cultivating the religious virtue of patience "may make it easier to cultivate patience as a virtue even in a worldly sense. If one supposes that the meaning or worth of one's life depends on one's success in particularly worldly projects, it may be hard to achieve the patience that even those projects themselves require".

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